

VEHICLE ADVERTISING SIGN, SYSTEM AND METHOD

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to advertising signs and message boards which may be removably mounted upon a motor vehicle, and systems and methods for storing such signs.

A variety of businesses, particularly in the fast food industry, employ part-time delivery vehicles. Typically, the business will provide the part-time delivery person with a sign that may be easily mounted upon the delivery person's vehicle, but removed at the end of the delivery person's shift and used during the next shift. Examples of vehicle-mounted removable advertising signs are disclosed in my earlier U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,667,428, 4,839,975, 5,084,994, and D.290,620. Previous vehicle-mounted signs employing magnetic means of attachment have been disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 3,440,748, issued to J. C. Hackley, and U.S. Pat. No. 2,960,786, issued to S. Wagner. A product of this type has also been sold commercially by Mr. Bill's Sign Co. of Leesburg, Fla. under the trademark "Drive-N-Ad".

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention concerns an apparatus and related method for displaying removable advertising sign on a vehicle. Magnetic means are provided for removably attaching the advertising sign to the vehicle, and includes illumination means for night-time visibility of the advertising message. Means are also provided for storing a plurality of the advertising members.

The advertising sign preferably comprises an enclosed, elongated hollow unitary member of molded translucent plastic, substantially triangular in cross section lateral to the elongated dimension, having opposing side surfaces which are bowed slightly outwardly to improve aerodynamics and with at least one side surface suitable for attaching advertisement thereto. The molded member includes a bottom having plural molded recesses each for receiving an individual magnet.

The magnetic means of attachment comprise plural magnets affixed to the base of the advertising member such that the advertising means will withstand forces occurring during the vehicle's motion without being dislodged. A special coating is disposed on each magnet to prevent scratching of the vehicle to which the magnets are attached.

The illumination means comprise at least one light positioned inside the advertising member, and with means for electrically coupling with an electrical source in the vehicle. The enclosed unitary construction of the molded advertising member prevents exposure of the illumination means to moisture during use.

Two forms of storage means are disclosed. In a first form, the storage means comprises a hollow member with means to support a plurality of the advertising members situated on end, and spacing means sufficiently thin so that an advertising member can fit between two contiguous spacing means. Both the spacing and support means are attached to the inner side of the hollow member at a position removed from the hollow member's edge. The shape of the hollow member is designed to surround a plurality of advertising members positioned on end in a space-efficient manner. The storage means are constructed in such a way that one holder may be completely or partially filled with advertising mem-

bers and further stacked with another holder atop the stored advertising members. The additional holder can then be partially or completely filled with additional advertising members and these steps repeated, creating a space-efficient means for storing as many layers of holders and advertising members as can fit within the storage area.

In the second embodiment of the storage means, there is provided an elongated ferrous metal bar of sufficient length to accept a plurality of the advertising members, so that the magnetic means may be attached to the bar.

THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the advertising member.

FIG. 1A represents a cross-sectional view of a portion of the advertising member and the magnetic means of attachment of the advertising member to a vehicle's roof, taken along the lines 1A—1A in FIG. 1.

FIG. 2 illustrates the bottom surface (base) of the advertising member of FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 indicates a placement of the advertising member of FIG. 1 atop a vehicle.

FIG. 4 is a perspective view of a first embodiment of storage means for a plurality of the signs of FIG. 1.

FIG. 5 is a perspective view of the holding apparatus with three advertising members placed therein.

FIG. 6 is a perspective view of two of the holding apparatus of FIG. 5, the bottom one filled and with the top partially filled.

FIG. 7 is a front view of the second embodiment of storage apparatus.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The preferred embodiment of the present invention will now be described with reference to FIGS. 1-7, where the removable advertising sign of the present invention is referred to generally by the reference numeral 10.

FIGS. 1 and 2 show two views of advertising sign 10, comprising a hollow, rigid and translucent unitary molded plastic advertising member 102 of substantially triangular cross section lateral to the elongated direction. This unitary construction significantly reduces the intrusion of water, which is detrimental to the illumination system. Advertising member 102 possesses two triangular end faces 108, a base 107, and two elongated, substantially rectangular side surfaces 106 which are somewhat curved to improve aerodynamic characteristics, and to which side and end surfaces advertising messages may be affixed. The molded advertising member 102 also contains four integrally molded feet 110, each at a corresponding corner of the base 107. All edges of the molded advertising member are closed and rounded to improve aerodynamic and moisture resistance properties.

FIG. 1A illustrates a coated magnet assembly 126 removably affixed within a similarly-shaped, indented recess 112 in each foot 110 via screw 128, which possesses a beveled head 132 and is threaded into metal sleeve 114. The sleeve 114 is set into a molded extension 113 through the base 107 and into the internal cavity of the advertising member 102. A flexible sleeve 130 is interposed between each magnet 126 and recess 112; beveled head 132 and flexible sleeve 130 permit a nonrigid attachment of magnet assembly 126 in the corresponding recess 112, thus permitting the magnet assembly 126 to pivot slightly as needed to adjust for

curvature in the vehicle's roof. Each magnet assembly 126 is coated with a scratch-resisting plastic material which is chosen to prevent both scratching of the vehicle's metallic surface and exposure of the metallic stand-off housing 134 (described below). A suitable scratch-resistant coating material is Plascoat PPA 571 manufactured by Plastronics, Inc. A screw hole 127 in the coated magnet assembly 126 is recessed so that the head of screw 128 will not contact the roof of the vehicle.

Magnet assembly 126 preferably comprises a coated metal housing 134 with lip 136, which extends slightly beyond a corresponding magnet 138 to permit easier removal of advertising member 102 from the vehicle roof; that is, to define a space between the coated face of the magnet 138 and the roof, so that the force of the magnet may more easily be decoupled from the metal of the roof. As noted by the dotted lines in FIG. 1A, the magnet assembly 126 extends slightly below the bottom level of the foot 110.

Base 107, shown in FIG. 2, contains holes 115 for three fasteners 116 for supporting the illuminating lamp assembly 140 shown by dotted lines in FIG. 1 and which is accessible through removable plate 118 (FIG. 2). This removable plate 118 is affixed into a recessed well 119 in base 107 by four fasteners 120, and also contains a notch 122 through which the electrical cord 124 for the lamp assembly 140 is extended.

Again noting FIG. 1, the illuminating lamp assembly 140 comprise a plurality of light bulbs 142 removably affixed in braces 144, which are attached to base 107 via fasteners 116. Electrical continuity is attained via electrical cord 124 coupled via plug 146, which is removably engaged into a conventional automobile lighter.

The advertising sign 10 is removably affixed to a metallic vehicle roof 180 in such a way that the advertising sign may be read from all directions, as shown in FIG. 3. This is accomplished by placing the long axis of advertising sign 10 on the roof 180 parallel to the windshield of the vehicle. In this configuration, the slight curvature of the forward-facing side 106 substantially reduces wind resistance, and thus, the likelihood that the sign 10 will be blown from the automobile at elevated speeds. The dimension of the feet 110 insures that the curvature of the roof does not prevent the magnets from engaging the roof 180. Alternately, the sign 10 may be placed longitudinally along the roof 180.

Apparatus for holding the advertising signs 110 in accordance with the present invention is shown in FIGS. 4-6 and is referred to generally by the reference numeral 20. This first embodiment of a storage apparatus comprises a rigid cylinder 202, the diameter of which is slightly greater than the length of two sides 106 of sign 10. The cylinder 202 has three substantially coplanar flat support members 204 sufficiently wide to support in a stable manner an advertising sign extending diagonally across the cylinder 202, and three substantially coplanar spacing members 206 sufficiently thin to fit between two contiguously placed advertising signs extending across the cylinder 202 and spaced from the support members 204. The support and spacing members 204, 206 are substantially equally spaced radially and pass through the axis 208 of the cylinder 202 in a radially offset fashion so that an advertising sign 10 placed between two spacing members 206 rests on one support member 204. In this embodiment six advertising signs 10 with their bases 107 pointing outward will fit into one holding apparatus 20 (see FIG. 5).

A plurality of combinations of cylinders and signs 10 as described in the preceding paragraph may be stacked as